

In-System Conflict Guide

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[Foreword]

This guide is designed to walk you through resolving and/or lessening issues with another system member. It is written to apply to systems regardless of origin and/or function but focuses more on situations affected by trauma at times. It is also written to be read in order, as a lot of the steps stack.

This guide works best for systems who have three or more members who can front at the same time. The only requirement is having *some* way to communicate, even if it's external.

This is a guide written by your peers, and as such, is not meant to take the place of therapy, professionals or your own practices that you find work for you.

This guide is written to give you more knowledge and options, not choose your options for you. As it is written to be as general as we can write it, there may be suggestions and knowledge not relevant to your situation. Please do your best to think critically about the information we give you, and don't take our words as law.

If you believe we have made a mistake or have overlooked something important, feel free to contact us at our discord, tectonictempest or our email, unwholewolf@gmail.com. (Listed in order of how likely and quickly we are to respond, with quickest and most likely at the beginning.)

If you believe that you could write a better guide, we genuinely invite you to do so. For the most part, more options are better when it comes to large communities like our own.

As a side note, you may notice that the majority of sources and resources were not made specifically for systems. This is due to a lack of accessible, system-specific resources. However, resources have been chosen based on their focus on dealing with shared problems between their intended audience and ours.

This guide has been edited to remove information related to sex and/or kink. The full version is available upon request.

This guide is a living draft, which means it will be edited when issues are pointed out, however, past a certain point, new editions will be created and linked here.

Let's start with milder issues first and work up to bigger and more complicated ones. The following section is for general conflicts.

SECTION A

Note that while the suggestions in this section may come off as condescending at times (which we apologize for), they genuinely work.

1 = Talk to Them

Talking to the other party is the first thing you do when you have an issue or conflict with someone.

A lot of times, conflicts can be lessened or prevented before they even start by being able to healthily set boundaries and being willing to work together with the other party to reach a common goal.

This does not include giving up on what you want immediately to please the other party. Fawning is a common trauma response and can keep you safe, but it's not helpful in healthy relationships.

If you know you will slip into fight/flight/fawn/freeze mode while setting boundaries or trying to work with the other party, you can set up accommodations in advance for this.

These accommodations can include things such as having someone or something around that makes you feel safer, planned breaks, or having the discussion in a way that lessens anxiety (such as talking over a messaging app like discord instead of aloud).

While it doesn't always feel that way, not every conflict or disagreement is a fight, and they don't have to be.

If you are caught unaware by a talk and feel like you're going into fight/flight/fawn/freeze mode, you can ask the other party to give you some time to calm down before you talk. Make sure to specify an amount

of time, as giving a vague time can potentially pressure you into beginning to talk before you're ready.

On the flip side of not standing your ground is not working with the other party.

While knowing what you want and not giving up things that are important to you are helpful, it's not helpful to ignore what the other party wants or to refuse to offer and/or try solutions.

It's okay to not know what to do, but don't make it harder on yourselves, you know?

Let's use an example to look at what healthy boundary setting looks like.

EX. A.1.1 An example situation would be if Pet repeatedly called Calvin "stupid" in front of their friends.

Calvin could respond by going up to him and saying, "Stop calling me stupid, asshole."

This, however, would not work very well.

The first issue with my response is that it is directly attacking Pet. Generally people who are attacked are not that willing to work with their attacker.

At the very least, their priority is going to be more "how do I defend myself" and less "how do I work with this person". This is not exactly a productive mindset for someone you want to consider your words seriously.

Another issue with trying to set boundaries using aggression and/or force is that using aggression and force may make you *feel* more in control, but it increases the chances for escalating the conflict if the other party also responds with force/aggression.

Remember! A fight needs at least two parties.

So, we need to start with non-aggressive boundary setting. Let's take a look at two other answers to the situation, soft and blunt.

Soft: "Hey Pet, when you call me stupid in front of our friends, I feel embarrassed and like you don't love me. Can you please stop calling me stupid?"

Blunt: "I don't like being called stupid in front of our friends. Can you please stop doing that?"

You may have noticed they are fairly similar. Let's go through all the little parts that make these requests better than the aggressive one and why.

The aggressive one is a command followed by an insult.

The non-aggressive ones are explanations followed by requests. They clearly state boundaries and do not attack the other person.

A good way of explaining your feelings without making the other person defensive is by using 'I statements'. A good 'I statement' is made of three parts. [\[1\]](#)

- 1- "I feel"
- 2- an emotion word
- 3- what makes you feel that emotion

An example is "I feel upset when you don't let me know when you'll be back home."

There is an I statement in the soft answer, but it's 'out of order'. You don't have to have the parts in order as long as they're all there.

The key difference between the soft and blunt answers is they follow the small talk rule, which is the closer you are or want to be with someone, the more information is given and the more truthful your response is.

The (usually unspoken) small talk rule is there for people to reassure each other that they aren't enemies and to prevent you from giving potentially sensitive information to people you don't trust.

You can walk away from an external person, but you may not have the ability to do so with other members. Because of this, I usually lean towards giving them more information and more truthful answers.

You don't need to give explanations for requests you make to strangers or acquaintances. You can just make the request.

Something that will help in discussion is to talk about specific things/events instead of generalized statements.

It also helps not to use the words, "should", "never", or "always" as those are often used for all-or-nothing/black and white statements that do not reflect reality and can make the other party feel victimized or as if they're being pushed into doing something.

Sometimes, a part of the problem is due to your actions. This is okay. Mistakes happen. It's important to acknowledge where you have messed up and how you can do better without degrading yourself.

Now, what do we do if we've talked to the other member 2-3 times already and they're still causing issues?

Now, this is when it can be helpful to involve a third party.

2 = Mediation

Mediation is the art of resolving conflict through a third party.

This differs from meditation, which is a set of techniques that focus on reducing stress and increasing body awareness by removing outside stimulation.

(Side Note: A lot of meditation techniques can be less effective for those who rely on adding stimulation to ground themselves. If you fall under this, you may need to modify meditation techniques so they work better for you.)

The third party must be agreed on by both conflicting parties. It is recommended that third parties are not biased towards either conflicting party and have skills in conflict resolution.

You may prefer to have a team of mediators as your third party over having a single mediator. This is fine as long as both conflicting parties agree on the team.

Personal Note: Our system usually uses other system members for third parties. Specifically, we find that our caretakers tend to be best at this due to experience in helping charges in their care resolve conflicts. Our protectors are often too stubborn and biased. (Your experiences may be different, but information is power regardless.)

You do not have to use another system member. External people can also help. These people may include your therapist(s), friends, or partner(s).

If you are not in a good place to tell your therapist about your system, you can still ask them for resources on mediation and conflict resolution. These are very useful tools outside of system contexts too, and I will be incredibly surprised if any therapist doesn't have resources for that.

If you are the third party, you will need to know three things.

- 1 = what each party wants
- 2 = what's preventing each party from getting what they want
- 3 = how to remove the barriers preventing each party from getting what they want

Let's use another example.

EX. A.2.1 Pet wants to eat healthier by cooking fresh meals but Calvin doesn't have the energy to cook healthy meals. They've been arguing for weeks.

What does each party want?

Pet = wants to eat healthier

Calvin = wants to conserve energy by eating snacks or other food that doesn't require cooking

What's preventing each party from getting what they want and how do we remove those barriers?

Let's say that you ask Pet what's preventing her from getting what he wants and she says that it's because "Calvin won't listen to me!"

One route you could take would be to completely side with Pet and tell Calvin that rot needs to listen to him and start cooking fresh, healthy meals.

However, after trying to do that, let's imagine that Calvin was unable to clean their shared body or take care of animals or do necessary work. This would be a failure.

This is why it's important to take into consideration both sides, because even if one side is wrong, they may point out problems that need to be dealt with.

This example is nice because it gives an example of when it is more helpful to combine the problems both sides have into one.

Our problem is wanting to eat healthier but not having enough energy to cook healthy meals. This isn't an issue that needs two sides, this is one that needs a team.

To solve this problem, we need solutions that fulfill both parts. Our solution is to have microwavable frozen dinners we can have instead of fresh food, as well as having easily accessible healthy snacks such as oranges or trail mix.

(This is just a simple introduction to mediation based on our experiences and a handful of resources. Please feel free to research on your own.)

3 = Complications and Solutions

You may have complications in trying to mediate or talk to the member causing issues. Here are some common ones and things you can do to compensate for them.

Poor Communication In-System - You can compensate for poor in-system communication by using external ways of communication.

This can include writing letters, writing in shared journals, using social media and/or apps with self-chat options, writing programs, sticky notes, or using an external person to send messages to each other.

No Third Party - To overcome this, you'll have to either negotiate, or mediate differently. The following instructions are for one way you can do this.

You'll need somewhere where you can write stuff down as well as something to write with.

First, you and the other party need to write down what you want.

Next, you'll need to look at what they want and write down how you could help them get what they want. Also write down what's preventing you from helping them get what they want.

The other party should do the same to your first entry.

After that, take both the other party's and your own answers and combine them into a graph with two boxes.

Box 1 = What we can do to help each other

Box 2 = What's preventing us from helping each other get what we want

If you notice that anything in box 1 solves something in box 2, cross it out. Otherwise, take some time (we would personally take a day to a week) and come up with 5-10 possible solutions together that will either make box 2 items less hindering or remove them all together.

After that, make a list of solutions that both sides are willing to try and start trying them.

"Couldn't we do this verbally?" You could. We personally prefer writing it down because it forces you to take more time before saying things, which can lead to more time for thought.

4 = Section A Overview

In short, how you deal with conflicts in-system is by first talking to them and setting or clarifying boundaries.

Then, if that doesn't work, you get an agreed upon third party to help y'all come to a conclusion you can both agree on.

It's important to make sure that you keep your goal(s) in mind and know what the other party's goal is too.

SECTION B

This section is for conflicts involving targets and members who are either causing active harm or who have caused active harm.

What they have done or are doing may make you feel a lot of emotions like anger, sadness, or disgust. You may want to take revenge or punish them. You may feel like they are pure evil or will never stop causing harm.

These are common feelings. We cannot control what emotions, urges, or impulses you feel. We can control how we respond to them, however.

This will be harder when you're starting out, as it's a learned skill. We say this as people who are currently struggling with controlling our reaction to anger. We are not going to pass negative judgment on genuine attempts, especially when we certainly don't have room to talk.

However, no matter what they have done, system members still have needs.

In fact, removing the ability or resources to fulfill needs (at least as much as the system in general can fulfill them) can and will backfire horribly.

This is because when people think they will never get better or are put into survival mode, they do not think clearly and will often try to gain control over their situation by lashing out more.

This section will talk in-depth about trauma, abuse, and its effects. If you need to take breaks during reading, we heavily encourage you to do so. This guide is not going anywhere.

1 = SORAD

We use an acronym to help explain what to do to de-escalate a violent conflict with other members. We will be referring to the maladaptive members causing harm to other members (commonly referred to as “persecutors”) as harm causing members.

This is because we feel it is self-explanatory and avoids the common problems associated with making “I am bad.” or “I do bad things.” part of an (often opt-out instead of opt-in) identity label.

Note: “Maladaptive” means “bad adaptation”. In less literal words and in our context, it refers to having poor coping skills.

The SORAD acronym is below.

S - Separate from targets

O - Observe or talk to the member causing harm to find the reason

R - Resolve or lessen the reason

A - Assign a compatible caretaker/protector or good influence

D - Don’t take away their access to needs or “punish”/enact revenge on them

[S - Separate from targets]

The first thing to do is to separate them from their target(s). This is to prevent further harm to the targets as well as stop any cycles of unhealthy behavior from feeding into each other.

We have noticed that it is much harder for harm causing members who are not separated from their targets to get better because they often (but usually unconsciously) rely on coping mechanisms that harm their targets.

Having unrestricted and unmonitored access to their targets can lead them to relapse into these unhealthy coping mechanisms, partially because older coping mechanisms are often easier due to habit-forming.

It's also important to separate the target so you can watch them for signs that they have been traumatized (or retraumatized, depending on your personal explanations).

[O - Observe or talk to the member causing harm to find the reason]

After separation, observe, talk to, and/or analyze the behavior of the harm causing member to figure out the reasons and/or motives behind what they did.

They may give you a false or misleading reason for what they did and they may also not know why they did it. It's entirely possible for them not to know that the false reason they're giving isn't the real reason. (Author Calvin didn't when rot was giving people false reasons, as a personal note.)

[R - Resolve or lessen the reason]

Once you've figured out the reason why they're reacting this way, help either solve it or lessen it. Ways to do this vary greatly by reason and situation, but how to figure out the ways are similar, if not the same for most cases.

In some situations, you may not currently have the ability to solve the base reason.

This is okay.

"We don't currently have the ability and/or tools to help you" is not and will never be "You cannot be helped." and if anyone says otherwise, you can send them directly to us.

[A - Assign a compatible caretaker/protector or other good influence]

At any point (but preferably after separating harm causing member and target if possible), it's helpful to assign both sides a caretaker and/or protector.

These assigned guardians do not have to have the role of either caretaker or protector as long as they can help encourage good behaviors and work well (or at least decently) with their charge and their charge's needs.

It's not helpful to have a guardian who isn't able to help, regardless of how roles work for your system.

Assigned guardians can be anywhere from 24/7 support or emergency contact depending on what the situation needs, although we recommend giving more support when they are more aggressive or erratic.

This is because they often have issues with remembering to use healthy coping skills. Also, harm causing members are more likely to have issues with isolation related stress than other members. Giving them a buddy tasked with watching out for them gives them a chance to learn how healthy relationships work firsthand.

[D - Don't take away their access to needs or "punish"/enact revenge on them]

The last thing to remember is to never take away their access to needs or "punish"/enact revenge on them.

Trying to get revenge on a harm causing member... only escalates the situation.

Generally, people will defend themselves. People who tend towards violence or who have been violent will use violence to keep themselves safe.

A similar situation happens with punishment. For the purpose of clarity, punishment here refers to causing pain and/or distress with the intent to stop unwanted behavior.

Causing pain/distress to someone with harmful coping mechanisms isn't gonna stop them from using harmful coping skills, it's gonna make them use the harmful coping mechanisms more.

We state this because it is common for people to believe that violence can fix violence, despite all evidence to the contrary.

2 = Motives and Complexes

We are going to start with a list of what are not motives, but in fact false or misleading reasons for causing harm.

- = "I'm evil"
- = "It's in my nature"
- = "Because I want to"
- = "I hate you"

You may have noticed that "because I enjoy it" is not on this list. This is because, while it's not a common motive, it *can* pop up and it's something we have personal experience with. We will talk about that in more detail later.

False reasons often pop up when harm causing members don't know the actual reason behind why they are harming others. These may require a bit of digging to get to the real answer.

We are going to start with a common motive behind harm causing members that can appear to be mindlessly violent. Usually these members are like this because they were either formed during or out of fight mode, or they have been stuck in fight mode for extended periods of time.

However, the motive most people talk about when discussing members who cause harm, is harming out of a misguided intent to help either the system as a whole or a specific member.

This is a common motive, but it's not the only one.

There is a difference between a harm-causing member unhealthily performing the system role of protector and a harm-causing member being considered an entity meant to protect by psychiatric circles.

In psychiatric circles, all members in a system are meant to protect the system in some way (outside of those who are meant to protect the perpetrators/abusers), which can be a helpful framework, but differs from having the community-used role of protector.

A lot of harm-causing members cause harm as a result of not performing their role in a healthy way.

It can be very helpful to try and figure out what their base role (or the role underneath the role labels used to describe harm-causing members) is, because then both you and the member can see what healthy versions of their job look like.

Some members cause harm because they believe, knowingly or unknowingly, that they are unlovable and that the only way to get affection or intimacy is to force or manipulate it out of their target.

This can also be a result of and/or take place with control issues, where the member feels like they have to control their target to stop their feelings of being powerless and/or to keep themselves safe.

The targets of these members can cause harm as well.

These harm-causing targets may lash out at others due to fear causing fight mode. They may feel cornered or trapped, and they may also fear abandonment.

System members aren't always going to exist in a vacuum. Sometimes they are a reflection of the system as whole or of a specific, other member.

Members can form to hold unwanted emotions and feelings such as anger, guilt, shame, self-blame, resentment, intrusive thoughts and more.

When a member who forms to hold these things keeps harming others, you may need to deal with the base issue systemwide.

If you do not deal with the base issue, it can be hard to get these members to stop harming others as they may have limited complexity and ability to reason out their own actions.

Even if you routinely get them to come around and stop harming others, these holders will often continue forming until the actual issue is resolved and/or lessened.

These members can be heavily influenced by your collective situation and it can be impossible to solve the base problem at the moment. This doesn't mean it will be impossible forever, and you can bring yourselves into a holding pattern until you have the chance to get better.

Members can also form in an attempt by the brain to desensitize you to your fears.

A common example of this are sadistic members who cause harm.

It *is* possible to have a healthy relationship with one's sadism, but if someone is causing permanent damage or genuine distress, they need to step back and ask themselves what they get out of harming others.

Funnily enough, harming others because you enjoy it is often a sort of secondary motive the same way anger is a secondary emotion. It is a reaction to a primary motive.

These primary motives are what you need to directly work with, but you still need to acknowledge the secondary motive/harmful coping skill when looking for better coping skills.

Primary motives can include lack of stimulation/boredom, revenge for mistreatment (perceived or otherwise), destructive envy, and feelings of powerlessness or lack of control.

There may be the unconscious belief that being the person harming others prevents them from being harmed. They may also enjoy the adrenaline rush.

It's important to note that enjoyment in others' pain and fear may remain even after dealing with the primary motive.

This is fine, as feelings themselves are morally neutral. Just feeling enjoyment in others' fear/pain is not a sign of 'evil', otherwise those who enjoy acting in haunted houses or watching/participating in mixed martial arts would be in trouble.

You may have noticed that in both of the activities mentioned above, neither involve people who don't want to be there, don't understand the risks, or lack the ability to leave at any time.

Dealing with this can get messier if there is a target who has low self esteem and/or has trauma bonded^[2] to the harm causing member.

[Trauma bonding is explained in greater detail later.]

There is also a noticeable and recorded tendency of traumatized people to feel a compulsive need to re-enact their traumas, and this is not necessarily exclusive to trauma caused by negative events experienced by the body and/or system as a whole.

We have seen some people refer to trauma caused by events which only happened within the system as intra-trauma (trauma as a result of intra-system events) or as being re-traumatized (when old trauma is triggered and then worsened by more negative events).

For the sake of this guide, we will simply refer to it as trauma or trauma which happens within a system.

___ Trauma Re-Enactment ___

So, why do some people feel a compulsion to re-experience their trauma?

Well, put simply, habituation, abnormal memory functioning and a messed up stress/post-stress response.

One of the evolutionary functions of memory is to record dangerous situations and how to survive them.

When you survive a dangerous situation and then are put in another situation that reminds your brain of the one you survived, your brain will flood your body with chemicals that make you more aware of your surroundings and make it easier to act quickly.

It will also pull up the memories of the dangerous situation you survived to use as a tool to figure out how to survive the new situation.

However, this response can quickly become harmful instead of helpful in our modern world.

Memories are usually talked about as being in order of time. Sometimes, especially in traumatized people, memories are stored by emotional/mental state and can only be or are easier remembered when in the same state as when they were recorded.

Memories may also be separated into different parts during vivid recall triggered by survival instincts such as somatic (touch), auditory, visual, or emotional.

This is because high stress levels cause the brain to prioritize survival over processing memory.

After the brain has decided that the (perceived or otherwise) dangerous situation is over, it will flood the body with chemicals that reduce stress and pain. These same chemicals can cause someone to feel relaxed, floaty, or happy.

Often, the stronger the stress chemicals, the stronger the post-stress chemicals. This is a big part of why some people enjoy things that are scary such as horror media or sky diving.

However, those who have been under long term stress will have weakened post-stress chemical responses, and often need more soothing and/or stimulation than the average population to relax.

The third thing to talk about is habituation. Habituation means becoming used to something. When someone is given the option between a new, uncertain choice and an old choice that is definitely bad while they aren't under impairing stress, they will pick the best choice.

However, choosing to do something new instead of doing something you are used to doing causes psychological arousal (which means you become more stimulated, alert and/or anxious, which drains energy).

When you are already at a high level of psychological arousal/stimulation, your brain prioritizes choices it can make without thinking so it can try to preserve energy for processing the situation and surviving it.

This means it tends to go for what you did the last time you were in hyperarousal/adrenaline mode... even if it's unhealthy and/or actively harmful.

So, because of this, some system members can form a psychological addiction to either intentionally or unintentionally triggering themselves or other members in order to feel the release of the post-stress chemicals, and then habituation makes it harder to get out of this cycle.

Warning signs for members like this can include "a vague sense of apprehension, emptiness, boredom, and anxiety when not involved in activities [similar to] the trauma." [\[3\]](#)

The paper linked in [\[3\]](#) also notes a link between a compulsion to give others (more) trauma and identifying "with the aggressor, which replaces fear and helplessness with a sense of omnipotence."

Omnipotence means being all powerful or having all the power and control you can possibly have and more.

Sometimes trauma fails to be processed into a solid memory and put in its place in one's personal narrative. And when internal methods of processing fail, external ones are pulled out.

In healthy situations, these include various arts and ways of talking about what happened.

However, non-consensual reenactment may be an unconscious way of attempting to process trauma in unhealthy situations.

In this situation, the victim is used as a container for transferring the feelings of powerlessness and loss of innocence away from the perpetrator. It can be seen almost like a case of severe projective empathy, in which instead of the perpetrator assuming that the victim has the same feelings that they would, they force the victim to undergo the same feelings they did.

(Source [\[3\]](#) also notes sex differences in which role is taken during re-enactment, however we have noticed that they line up more along socialized gender(s) in our own system. We will also note that we are not saying that traumatized people are "doomed" to harm others as a result

of their trauma, but pointing out how the two things can influence each other.)

Treatment options for those who struggle with compulsive trauma re-enactment seem to focus on taking control of the choices available in one's current life and building support systems instead of exposure therapy.

Please note that while exposure therapy may be harder for this group, it is not impossible. Another thing to note is exposure therapy is different from compulsive reenactment as exposure therapy focuses on teaching your brain that a certain trigger isn't actually a sign of danger, while compulsive reenactment solidifies triggers through retraumatization.

Actually let's go ahead and discuss trauma bonds and the cycle of abuse in depth.

You may be wondering at this point why we are going so in-depth about coping skills, trauma, and abuse when you personally may not have been abused and/or have trauma.

The reason is because that information is power, and knowing the little ins and outs of trauma and abuse can be helpful even for those who have not experienced these things. Not to mention... coping skills are not exclusive to trauma survivors.

Another note is that the trickier in-system conflicts to deal with seem to be close enough to how abuse between people with different bodies work to where knowing these things becomes very helpful.

Back to the topic.

The cycle of abuse has three stages, tension building, the snap, and the honeymoon phase.

During the tension building stage, the abuser becomes gradually more irritable and/or withdrawn. This can be due to poor coping skills and/or repression of unwanted emotions.

During the snap, the abuser lashes out at the target in some way.

Afterwards, in the honeymoon stage, the abuser tries to make up for the snap by being overly sweet and affectionate.

Trauma bonding describes an attachment to someone who is harming you and how that attachment is affected by the harm.

This happens when the target lacks strong enough external support systems. In the absence of strong external support systems such as friends or family, people will often form an attachment to whoever is harming them.

This is because people rely on others to fulfill their needs, and lacking attachment means you may not have the ability to fulfill those needs.

Because of this, sometimes our brain determines it is better to have an attachment to someone who may or may not fulfill needs than it is to not have an attachment at all.

Both targets and harm causing members can be trauma bonded to an outside abuser or harmer, as well as an internal one. Two or more harm-causing members can also be trauma bonded to each other.

Trauma bonding in the case of a target to a harm causing member or a harm causing member to another harm causing member is tricky because it can be harder for them to admit they are unhealthy in the first place as well as possibly having poor coping mechanisms that feed into and reinforce each other.

EX. B.2.1 A target struggling with shyness as a result of anxiety around outsiders, who has trauma bonded to an harm causing member who is outwardly aggressive.

The target may become worse due to handing all conflicts they find themselves in to the harm causing member, who acts aggressively and scares off the other party.

This reinforces the idea that outsiders will abandon them, causing both parties to become more isolated from possible external support systems.

The harm causing member may see the target's anxiety as a weakness and attempt to force them into being more aggressive. They may also

punish the target for their perceived weakness and/or intentionally isolate them from others in an attempt to protect them. The target may also serve as an outlet for the harm causing member if there are no external outlets for their anger.

In this case it can be hard to separate them because the target may believe that only the harm causing member can protect them and give them access to their needs. The target may also believe that any harm done to them is justified.

Any attack on the harm causing member in this case would cause the target to become immediately defensive. Even if they know that the harm causing member is unhealthy for them, they may feel unable to leave or as if there would be nowhere else to go.

Another negative consequence of attacking the harm causing member in this case is that it may serve as justification for the harm and/or isolation to escalate, either as a form of punishment for the target to prevent them from bringing the harm up again, or as misguided protection against outsiders who "don't understand [their] relationship".

The target may even participate in self-isolation and attacking/encouraging their harm causing member to attack those who bring up issues with their relationship.

Breaking a trauma bond is... hard, even when the traumas that formed the bond did not happen to the body. The target may consciously or unconsciously believe that what they're going through does not count as "real" abuse, harm or trauma so they can't ask for help, and they "shouldn't even feel like this".

Generally, if it forms for the same reasons as trauma, gives you trauma symptoms, and is helped by the same skills and techniques as trauma, you can reasonably call it trauma.

Of course trauma formed in different situations are going to be different and require areas/resources to talk about challenges specific to that situation, but that doesn't mean it suddenly isn't trauma or that we can't share resources that address shared problems.

Someone who went through trauma within their system cannot inherently talk about what it's like to go through that trauma bodily, but someone who went through that trauma bodily also cannot inherently talk about what it's like to go through that trauma within a system.

Some targets may believe that any trauma within their system is inherently a reflection of bodily trauma, and that makes their trauma and pain fake.

This is false. Being a reflection of body trauma does not mean that the reactions or trauma behind it are fake. It also doesn't mean you can't ask for help with it.

It is important to acknowledge that you can still deal with trauma that is covered in a substitute belief without forcing yourself/your system to remove the substitute belief before you're ready. There's still trauma under that metaphorical trenchcoat.

(Not to mention that internal re-enactment and re-traumatization can still cause harm regardless.)

A harm causing member who is trauma bonded to an external abuser or perpetrator may put the goals, safety, and wants of the abuser over the needs and safety of the system or themselves.

This member may be fearful of being harmed by an abuser, or they may have overwhelmingly positive emotions towards them. They may also have little to no emotions and wish only to fulfill their purpose for existing, which can include actions that serve the abuser(s) and/or those which "punish" the system, among others.

If a harm causing member is trauma bonded to an external abuser and identifies with them more than their system, they may lack empathy and compassion for other members or anyone who tries to help. They may also only be able to see the abuser's point of view and/or see them as all-powerful.

In this case, it might be necessary to break down whatever this member's been told or believes before trying to reach them emotionally.

In short, motives for harming can be grouped into four categories.

- 1= Fight Mode
- 2= Misguided Helper
- 3= Control/Attachment Insecurity
- 4= Holding Collective Issues

Members can fall into multiple categories as well as change categories over time.

Please note that motives do not excuse harm, but explain why the harm happens and how to stop or lessen it.

3 = Holding Patterns and Coping Mechanisms

To start, note that as a system, you can use resources specifically made for helping others cope as well as those made for helping yourself cope. This is because in some systems, emotions can bleed over into other members.

In general, you can use a resource not made for you or made for other people if

- 1 = doing so does not limit the intended audience from using the resources
- 2 = it helps you

Why are we specifying this? Because sometimes resources originally designed for groups you are not a part of can also help you.

As an example, we have struggled with some particularly unpleasant intrusive thoughts and found that an article intended for those with OCD greatly helped us.

Using this article to help us did not prevent those with OCD from also using it, and it helped us.

To begin, what is a holding pattern?

A holding pattern is “a state of waiting or suspended activity or progress”^[4] In our case, this refers to when someone has stopped getting worse, but isn’t getting better yet.

If a harm causing member has more complex or multiple motives/issues, they may take a while to get better.

The first step to getting better is to stop getting worse, which is why holding patterns are so important. It is perfectly okay when someone cannot do the best thing yet as long as they're still trying to do better things.

This concept is often referred to as "harm reduction".

An example of harm reduction is having the choice between letting a child walk into a busy street and unintentionally hurting them by pulling them back, and choosing to take the chance of unintentionally hurting them.

The point we're trying to make here is that it's okay and fairly normal for people to not get better right away.

Let's go to coping mechanisms!

From our experience, you can put coping mechanisms on two basic axes on a graph.

1= Distraction VS Dissection

2= Stationary VS Active

Distraction is helpful for feelings/urges/emotions that get stronger when focused on. It's really good for short term impulses that spike up, but not for long term belief-type feelings that can end up simmering.

Distraction takes your mind off of thoughts which cause the cycle of bad thoughts > bad feelings > bad thoughts.

A good example would be feeling the urge to harm someone and distracting yourself from it.

Dissection is helpful for feelings/urges/emotions that get stronger when ignored. It's good for long term feelings, but isn't that helpful for short term impulses.

Dissection looks at the reasons behind unhealthy urges/thoughts and tries to solve or express them.

A good example of this would be trying to figure out why you feel the urge to harm people, like perhaps anger, and then doing things to lessen the amount of anger or redirect it.

Repression of emotions is generally bad. Even when you distract yourself, it's with the goal of letting the feelings leave by themselves and allowing yourself to feel other emotions, not by being shoved into a box.

However, if needed, you can repress an emotional response for a short period of time until it's a safer or better time to engage in coping mechanisms. This does not mean shoving the feelings into a box, but putting them away for a short time until you can take them down and look at them properly.

This does have the potential of giving you the same problems as repression in general, which includes having issues with determining your emotions and having moments where you snap and feel as if you are out of control, so be careful.

It can take time to figure out what's better for you or for specific feelings/urges/emotions and that's fine! We recommend taking at least a day to a week when testing which one works better for you.

Examples of Coping Mechanisms

Stationary, Distraction

- = Rewatching your favorite series
- = Taking a nap

Active, Distraction

- = Cleaning
- = Baking without an electric mixer

Stationary, Dissection

- = Writing in a journal
- = Vent art

Active, Dissection

- = Screaming/Singing
- = Practicing martial arts

4 = Section B Overview

- S - Separate from targets
- O - Observe or talk to the member causing harm to find the reason
- R - Resolve or lessen the reason
- A - Assign a caretaker/protector if possible
- D - Don't take away their access to needs or "punish"/enact revenge on them

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SECTION C

This section is for actively helping members who are causing harm.

1 = Beginning to Help

If you're in this section, we're gonna assume you already know their motive for doing harm/getting worse.

The basic process of helping a harm causing member boils down to three steps.

- 1= Remove barriers
- 2= Offer rewards for doing/trying to do good
- 3= Keep trying

Note: It's okay to struggle and/or make mistakes! Please note that even failure is helpful because it lets you narrow down options for what does work and what is helpful.

You may have noticed or will notice that what we write/have written is similar to both mediation and parenting/reparenting techniques.

This is because both are very helpful in these cases!

Mediation is helpful for conflicts, even messy ones or those that have harmed people. Using parenting techniques are helpful because they have a lot of information on how to teach people how to be healthy adults.

It's important to realize that other system members may not have the same access to memories and coping skills. They also may be stuck on certain developmental milestones due to trauma, lack of time/space to grow, and/or a neurodivergency.

Point being, they may need the space, time, and care to get past the missed milestone(s) and/or work around where they're lacking. This does not inherently make them children nor should they be talked down to like children often are.

(We're not even comfortable with *physical* children being talked down to like they often are and we don't even like kids. They're... they're still full people despite their lack of knowledge and control.)

There *are* also some harm causing members who are not adults, or who are children who look like adults^[5] and it's unhelpful how they're often overlooked just because it's not talked about.

Taking care of a harm causing member and trying to help them reach milestones can sometimes be uncomfortable for all parties involved and that's ok. Uncomfortable does not inherently mean unsafe.

The harm causing member may intentionally target their assigned guardian or buddy in an attempt to get them to give up on them. This behavior is also often seen in traumatized children as a maladaptive form of testing boundaries (which usually happens for the first time around 2-4 years old in healthy children^[6]).

Boundary-testing behavior isn't fun to deal with, especially when it's aggressive, but it's not abnormal.

_____ Boundaries _____

What are some reasons people test boundaries?^[7]

- 1= to see if the boundaries and the consequences for pushing on them are the same every time
- 2= seeking help or connection/comfort
- 3= curiosity towards "what will happen if I do this"
- 4= to clarify boundaries
- 5= trying to exert control

In a healthy adult, boundary testing is usually replaced with clear communication.

These boundary testing behaviors can be affected by stressors and traumas.

For example, someone who has gone through abuse may lash out at a new, non-abusive caretaker in an attempt to see what they have to do in order for more abuse to occur.

Change is stressful, even if it's for the better. Some members who are suddenly treated with more compassion may be intensely distrustful, especially if their system has isolated them^[8] or treated them as less

deserving of person-respect (as opposed to authority-respect), connection, and/or help than other members.

Harm causing members may also view compassion towards them as not being respected or as something they can take advantage of to gain control. It is important not to take this as a sign that they cannot be helped or that you are failing, but that they do not trust and/or feel safe with you yet.^[9]

In some cases saying “No” is bad. Setting boundaries is not one of them.

It’s the specific way you say “No” that matters.^[10]

As always, if you cannot do the best thing, do the next best thing.

So, what is the best thing here?

First things first, remember your goal. If you are reading this guide, I hope your goal is to lessen or prevent harm because that is the goal of this guide.

It’s important to keep this goal in mind because sometimes, you may need to choose between “what they deserve” and “what will help them heal and/or stop harming others”.

The next thing to remember, is to make sure to try to control your own responses to your emotions. Nobody can control what emotions go through them, but controlling your reactions is a skill the vast majority of people can fine-tune.

Having the ability to not take the verbal lashing out of harm causing members personally is an incredibly valuable skill. It’s not a sign of weakness to feel hurt by their words, but being able to look and go, “Their anger and harsh words toward me are something they need to work through and not my fault.” is helpful.

(This skill takes time to build, so don’t worry if you aren’t perfect at it right away. It’s okay to struggle.)

The next thing is to address the harm causing members’ emotions and feelings causing them to lash out at that moment.

For example, they might be lashing out as a result of anxiety, in which you can go, "Hey, let's stop for a bit and do some breathing exercises."

Of course they may have trouble identifying their emotions, in which case you may have to go, "Hey let's stop for a bit and figure out what you're feeling."

Remember that you can change the templates we provide into something which feels genuine to you and the situation. In fact, we encourage it. A genuine statement that sounds a bit mean is always better than a fake feeling statement that sounds nice.

The important thing is being non-judgemental and getting them to try a coping skill, not what you say to get that across.

You may not be able to get a super clear answer, but figuring out if the emotion is bad or good and if it's low or high energy is enough to start picking out coping mechanisms to try.

You may encounter resistance here due to distrust and/or a lack of feeling safe.

Another thing to remember is that harm-causing members who feel the need to control others often do so because they consciously or subconsciously feel that they need to be in control in order to keep themselves safe.

You can appeal to the common need for control by offering two choices that you're okay with, such as, "If you want to be left alone, you gotta take a moment to chill out with me before I leave because I'm worried you're gonna harm yourself/others, but otherwise you can try to use (coping mechanism). The choice is yours."

(Don't offer a 'right' and 'wrong' choice. It is not helpful and is frustrating for whomever you ask it to.)

You can also lessen lashing out with the purpose of gaining control by giving the harm-causing member as much power as you can. This can include giving them choices in decor or coping skills, responsibilities such as taking care of pets, and genuinely listening to their opinions. (You don't have to agree, just acknowledge their opinions and feelings.)

A tip that may help is to turn things you and the harm causing member need to do into a game.

This may work better with more easily excited members or those that act younger or prefer to be treated as younger, but when it works, it sure does work.

Another thing you can use are If-then requests. These are made up of two parts, the If and the Then.

Here's an example below.

EX B.4.1 "If you apologize to Tancred for hitting him, then I will make sure you can have some uninterrupted time to front and watch Castlevania."

The If is what you want, and the Then is what you are offering to give them.

This is most effective when the harm-causing member wants to do something or go somewhere, although, don't go overboard or they will begin hiding what they like from you in fear that you will use it against them.

Remember not to punish harm-causing members for expressing negative emotions.

_____ Creating Safety _____

Going back to how harm-causing members will often continue to lash out until they feel safe(er), let's talk about how we can make them feel safer.

Compassion and consistency are the two most important tools to use in this case.

Consistency is stability, the same rules with the same consequences, no matter what. Working together to provide a sense of external stability lessens feelings of anxiety and powerlessness.

Simply put, if you don't have to be in control to know what will happen to you, then you aren't as eager to take control.

Compassion is offering a place without danger, a safety net. This doesn't involve pretending that the harm causing member has not caused harm or that they aren't responsible for their actions.

Compassion is showing who you're talking to that they don't need to cause harm to be safe, and it is also guiding them through dealing with the consequences of their actions.

Compassion doesn't have to be soft, it just has to be calm. It doesn't have to be a constant hovering "I know what's right for you", it just has to be "You can always contact me when things go wrong"

Compassion for harm causing members does not have to be limited to their assigned guardian, but everyone in their system can encourage them towards making better choices. In fact, the more they feel respected and safe within the system as a whole the easier progress may be.

And of course, as a guardian, caretaker, or buddy, one has to balance preventing harm caused by your assigned member and respecting their rights to privacy and making their own mistakes.

It's a hard balance to try and strike, but it's possible.

Another thing to keep in mind when taking care of a member causing harm is that social isolation is very common in this group and can irritate pre-existing issues.

While it's important to give them the ability to talk to other members, it's equally, if not more, important to make sure they have the ability to make friends outside of the system.

We don't mean throwing them in uncomfortable social situations or planning playdates with other systems. (Unless both parties seem

genuinely interested. Sometimes all the big scary monster wants is a childhood.)

Offering the ability to talk to others like them specifically can be incredibly helpful because so often, harm-causing members have to either censor themselves for the comfort or safety of others or be demonized when they talk about their experiences.

Knowing how to soften the way you speak and avoid heavy topics are very helpful, but it's not an easy skill to pick up for everyone.

However, while the benefits of being able to talk openly about heavy things with those like them is very real, there are a few potential dangers to look out for.

The first danger is what are often called the "trauma olympics". This is when people's traumas are compared to each other in an attempt to make their own seem worse or more often, seem enough to count as trauma.

This is a dangerous practice because it encourages both sharing potentially very sensitive and heavy information, as well as the idea that the weight of trauma on your life is directly related to society's perceived weight of the events that caused it.

(Side note: *"I may have troubles in my life, but I'm glad I have certain good things and don't have to deal with certain bad things."* is very different from *"I shouldn't feel this way because others have it worse."* and it is unhelpful that they are both called comparisons.)

An added issue with trauma olympics in the social circles of harm-causing members specifically is that they may (consciously or unconsciously) feel peer pressure to be "worse" than everyone else.

This can stem from all-or-nothing thinking where only the worst can be bad and/or only the best can be good. It can also be related to control issues, where being around someone "worse" than you is threatening because they are seen as more dangerous and less able to be harmed than you.

A related problem is not knowing how to ask for help or comfort and purposefully getting worse so that others will notice you are doing poorly and step in instead.

Other people, no matter how much they care about you, are sometimes going to miss signs of you doing poorly. It's not a failure on their part, but a result of trying to balance the responsibilities and problems of the fast paced world we live in.

If you notice that your assigned member seems to be getting worse on purpose, you can coach them on how to ask for help in a way that works for them.

A lot of people have trouble directly asking for help or comfort because it can make them feel uncomfortably vulnerable. It can be helpful to set up code words/phrases/actions that signal to you that they need help or comfort.

Otherwise, it may be better to just offer them any comfort and/or help (especially those they seem to lean towards) they want whenever you're around them.

You may need to frame it as "Do you want..." instead of "Do you need..." as admitting they want something may make them feel less weak than admitting they need something. We know it's small, but it goes a long way.

It's important to reward behavior you want to see, regardless of if it's baseline human decency or extra.

Rewarding for growth is better than rewarding for reaching a milestone because relapses happen, and your charge may hit a milestone more than once, but they can always work on growing.

It is important to note that some harm causing members will take time to get better, possibly even years (like in author Calvin's case). It taking time is not a sign of failure.

We have occasionally seen people saying things like, "We've been trying for a whole week and (x) still isn't better." Which is concerning because

while situations *can* resolve themselves in under a week, it's not exactly an outlandish amount of time.

We are aware first-hand how tiring and painful it can be to reparent or otherwise help a member with issues that linger. We are also aware of how intensely rewarding it can be to see someone once considered unable to get better, do exactly that. Get better.

It can be hard for a member to give up things such as their identity, their beliefs, their goals and wants for the sake of their system. It can be seen as similar to a sort of death for someone who hasn't gotten the chance to taste recovery yet, which is another big reason why some harm causing members try to sabotage their own healing.

Other reasons for not wanting to cooperate can include genuinely believing they are doing the right thing or being helpful.

They may have a trauma bond to an external abuser and believe their words over that of fellow system members. They may also have a close bond to another harm causing member and feel that getting better would mean losing that bond or siding with 'the enemy' over someone they care about.

When someone is causing harm mainly out of a misguided attempt to help, it is often better to lean more on mediation tactics over reparenting ones. It's when someone is causing harm mainly out of selfishness and/or poor coping skills, that we find that reparenting is more helpful than mediation tactics. (Both are still important in all cases!)

In short, do your best to remove problems that can cause their issues to flare up, such as poor coping skills, feeling unsafe, vaguely defined boundaries/rules or social isolation.

When the harm-causing member does something better, reward them. Make sure they know what you want from them.

Finally, guide your maladaptive member through dealing with the natural consequences of their actions, and show them that they have an emergency contact.

3 = Complications, Internal and External

Here is a list of common complications followed by what you can do to compensate for them.

Target Refuses To or Cannot Be Separated - Sometimes the target has formed a trauma bond in which cutting them off from their harm causing member without easing them into it can cause them great distress and they may even actively sabotage attempts to help them. Sometimes separating target(s) and harm causing member(s) just isn't an option. In both cases, you will have to focus on monitoring over restricting interaction and helping the target build a support system outside of the harm causing member.

Sometimes you can partner someone who has the same role, but carries it out in a healthy way, with the harm causing member and their target. Doing this is helpful for trauma bonded targets because it lets them see what the healthy version of their harm causing member looks like and allows them to pull away from harm causing member at their own pace.

There is the possibility of the trauma bonded target coming back to the harm causing member several times. As far as we can tell, it seems to be less harmful to allow the trauma bonded target to come back to their harm causing member (under observation and with an emergency contact) than it is to try and forcefully keep them apart.

Trying to force them to stay apart may cause the target to contact their harm causing member behind everyone's back, or it could cause them to become aggressive in an attempt to "out-force" you.

This doesn't mean it's a bad idea to discourage the target from going back to the actively harm-causing member they have trauma bonded with, but that it's better to allow contact wanted by the target in a safe or safer environment instead of trying to outright ban them from contacting each other.

Member Causing Harm Refuses To Cooperate - This is usually a result of not seeing any benefit for them to cooperate. This can be solved by offering benefits and listening to them without demonizing them.

(They may also attempt to demonize themselves in an attempt to keep themselves safe.)

Poor In-System Communication - In this case, you may need to rely on external forms of communication and/or the help of an external third party. You may also want to work on improving internal communication through meditation (not mediation), visualization techniques, and lessening stress/dissociation (which can raise barriers).

Bad Environment - If you are in a high stress environment that is affecting you, it's probably better to go ahead and put getting out of that environment as high of a priority as you can. If you know you will not be able to get out of that environment for a while, you can still find smaller ways to lessen stressors.

Sometimes, through no fault of your own, you are in a bad situation. Trying to make the bad situation better doesn't make it not bad anymore, but you'd be surprised how much a little goes a long way.

4 = Section C Overview

The basic process of helping a harm causing member boils down to three steps.

- 1= Remove barriers
- 2= Offer rewards for doing/trying to do good
- 3= Keep trying

In some cases saying "No" is bad. Setting boundaries is not one of them.

Compassion and consistency are the two most important tools to use when making harm-causing members feel safer.

Providing a sense of external stability for harm causing members lessens feelings of anxiety and powerlessness.

Compassion is showing who you're talking to that they don't need to cause harm to be safe, and it is also guiding them through dealing with the consequences of their actions.

Offering the ability to talk to others like them specifically can be incredibly helpful because so often, harm-causing members have to either censor themselves for the comfort or safety of others or be demonized when they talk about their experiences.

Members who have harmed are not doomed to keep harming, and members who have the potential to harm are not doomed to harm.

SECTION D

This section goes over our recommendations for what to do both after and before in-system conflicts to both lessen the effects of the conflicts, and make them less likely to happen again.

1 = Environment and Maslow's Pyramid

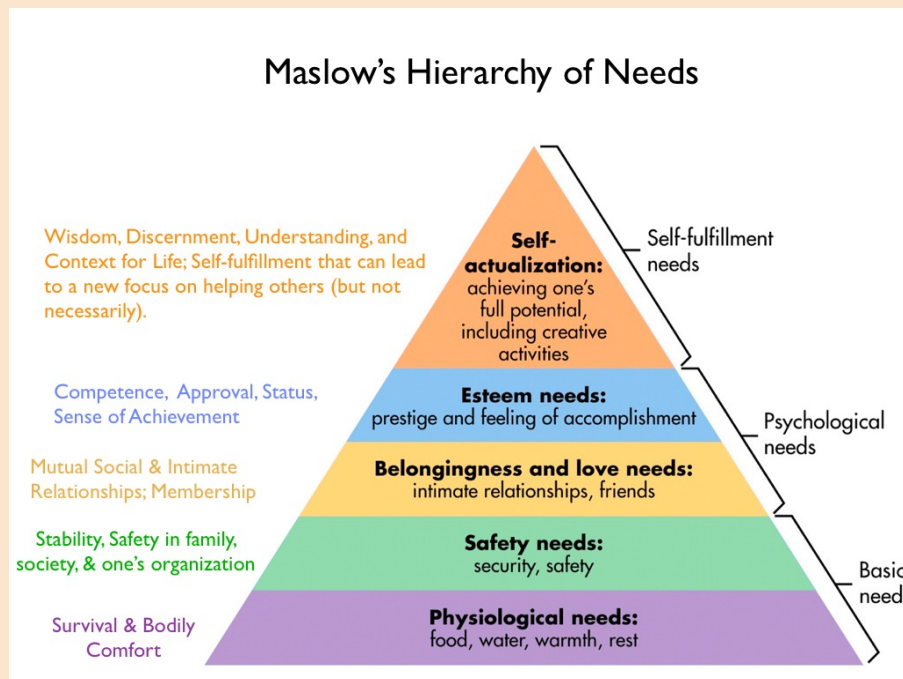
The environment you are in as a collective can vastly impact you. This can be for the better or for the worse.

You may not have a massive amount of control over your environment for whatever reason, but that's okay. Figure out what you *can* control and keep that in mind for when you need some change.

One thing can be making sure your space can be moved around in and enjoyed by keeping things mostly organized and clean. It's small, but it helps.

Another thing can be to allow members at risk of causing harm or who are causing harm to change your shared environment. This can let them feel in control without harming anyone and make them feel more at home.

Something you can try to make goals to fulfill your collective basic physiological needs at least once daily, and your collective psychological relationship needs at least once weekly. This is more bare minimum than anything, but it can help to get into the habit of checking what needs are being ignored or overlooked and then fulfilling them.



Above is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

You *can* use it as a sort of bottom-to-top checklist when taking care of yourself or another, but you may find it not detailed enough.

2 = Self/Selves Esteem + Trauma

The biggest thing people overlook is how self esteem can affect conflicts and formation of members.

Having a low self-esteem or selves-esteem can cause members to form who hold the feelings of "I don't deserve [thing/respect/person]". These members may act on this feeling by attempting to remove what you feel you don't deserve from you.

Note: If you are having problems with trauma or other mental health issues and you are in the place where you can get a therapist, please do.

They can be great resources, and you don't have to put up with a therapist who isn't good for you. (It happens. Sometimes a therapist's work style just isn't suited to what you want in a therapist, they lack experience in an area you need help in, or maybe they're just bad.)

Now, for low self esteem^[19], there are two things I'm gonna go through that helped us personally and that's CBT^[20] and FAST.

CBT in this case is an acronym referring to Cognitive Behavior Therapy. The goal of this therapy is to look at the relationship between behaviors, feelings, and thoughts and see where you can make adjustments in order to better distinguish reality and personal feelings.

FAST is also an acronym (see below), but this one can be directly used as a skill.

F – Be fair to yourself as well as other people. It's important to learn that your needs are just as important as someone else's. This is also about being assertive and learning to speak your truth.

A – No apologies. Don't be overly apologetic. Don't apologize for having an opinion or disagreeing with others.

S – Stick to your values and don't compromise or abandon your values trying to please others or conform.

T – Be truthful and don't make excuses. Be honest and don't exaggerate or tell little white lies

Working through trauma is,,, messier than this, but it can be (over)simplified down to getting out of any on-going traumatic situations, processing what happened to you, and learning how to deal with future stress in ways that don't harm you or others.

3 = Team Building + Communication

One huge thing you can do to make conflicts less common is to practice team building exercises^{[21][22]} and to routinely set aside time for in-system communication.

Team building exercises can feel pretty silly to do, but they can help build bonds! Besides,,, what is a system but a sort of team?

Most team building activities are for workplaces or schools, but you can still modify them so they work for y'all.

As for communication, it can be very helpful to set aside time to sit down and write down any notes other system members have.

These notes can include problems or wants they want to address, feelings or opinions they just want to note, or things they wanna tell other members.

4 = Section D Overview

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Having a low self-esteem or selves-esteem can cause members to form who hold the feelings of "I don't deserve [thing/respect/person]". These members may act on this feeling by attempting to remove what you feel you don't deserve from you.

One thing you can do to make conflicts less common is to practice team building exercises and to routinely set aside time for in-system communication.

SECTION E

In this section, we include our full conclusion, afterword and source/resource list. What is an afterword?

"The afterword is a literary device that comes after the central story (otherwise known as body matter) and addresses how the book came into existence, how the idea for the story was formed, answers any questions that may have been left unclear, etc." [\[23\]](#)

Our source and resource list is in order of how they were cited in this guide.

Additional resources may be listed by relevant section and chapter.

1 = Guide Overview

In short, how you deal with conflicts in-system is by first talking to them and setting or clarifying boundaries, then getting a third party to help if that fails.

When dealing with members actively causing harm, remember SORAD

S - Separate from targets

O - Observe or talk to the member causing harm to find the reason

R - Resolve or lessen the reason

A - Assign a compatible caretaker/protector or good influence

D - Don't take away their access to needs or "punish"/enact revenge on them

Motives for harming can be grouped into four categories.

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The basic process of actively helping a harm causing member boils down to three steps.

1= Remove barriers

2= Offer rewards for doing/trying to do good

3= Keep trying

Members who have harmed are not doomed to keep harming, and members who have the potential to harm are not doomed to harm.

The environment you are in as a collective can vastly impact you. This can be for the better or for the worse.

You may not have a massive amount of control over your environment for whatever reason, but that's okay. Figure out what you *can* control and keep that in mind.

Try to bond and communicate with your system members to lessen conflict and make conflicts that do pop up easier to resolve.

2 = Afterword

I am author Calvin, and I have elected to write this afterword because this project is the closest to my heart and I have done most of the work.

First, I would like to thank my co-authors, Pet and Hop/Halley. I could not have written this without your contributions.

Next, I would like to thank Charlie and my friends. If I didn't have y'all, I doubt I would be here today.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who ever answered my questions, corrected my assumptions, and shared their experiences with me. I hope you continue to do so, but I won't demand it.

We wrote this guide because it's something we could have used when we were younger, and because the majority of resources specifically for harm causing members focus on maladaptive protectors.

I have never been a maladaptive protector. Caretaker, yes, but not protector.

I didn't harm my fellow members because I was trying to protect them, I harmed them because I wanted to feel like I was in control and had power. I harmed them because I was jealous of their innocence and I wanted to take it.

I felt empty and numb, except for this straining under my skin. The only thing that would stop it was harming them. It was a temporary relief, but it feels good to feel like a god.

I got better slowly. I'm still getting better. It hurts to get out of environments too stressful for you to stop or slow down and then start feeling the metaphorical nerves growing back. It hurts to start changing.

I don't hold grudges against people, but I do against events. I still remember being told there was no hope for me besides forced dormancy or fusion. I am still better.

I am still better.

I don't think being redeemable or irredeemable is a helpful or useful distinction outside of fiction because it is the moral boundary beyond which you cannot do better. People can always do better things, regardless of how much pain and harm they have caused.

This does not erase their poor actions or mean you have to forgive those who harm you and/or let them back in your life.

I have never asked my victims for forgiveness, but I have sat with them while they dealt with flashbacks to what I did to them. And I comforted them with my hands held up to where they could see them.

They have mixed feelings about me because I have done so much for them, and because I have done so much to them. Pet says that I'm bittersweet and that she can only think about the bad things I've done to him when I'm not around. I don't know what that means.

I have been unconditionally loved, and that still wasn't enough to stop me. I am still unconditionally loved and it feels devastating. I cannot escape it, but it also cannot abandon me.

To those I have harmed: Consider this guide an apology. I cannot change the way that I have harmed you, but I hope with this, others like you can escape the same harm.

3 = Sources List + Extra Resources

The following will be tagged with common triggers as well as other tags/notes meant to enhance one's experience. If there is a tag which you feel shouldn't be warned for, it is likely because that tag was not meant as a warning.

We were also fairly lazy in tagging these, so you can ask us to tag for certain things if we missed something.

[A1]

[1] I STATEMENT WORKSHEETS

<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/i-statements>

TAGS; GENERAL, WORKSHEET

NOTES;

[B2]

[2] TRAUMA BONDING ARTICLE

<https://www.verywellmind.com/trauma-bonding-5207136>

TAGS; TRAUMA SPECIFIC

NOTES;

[3] COMPULSIVE RE-ENACTMENT

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/20490954_The_compulsion_to_repeat_the_trauma_Re-enactment_revictimization_and_masochism

TAGS; TRAUMA SPECIFIC, MEDICAL PAPER

NOTES;

[B3]

[4] HOLDING PATTERN DEFINITION

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/holding%20pattern>

TAGS; GENERAL

[C1]

[5] FELIS ON YOUNGER ABUSER-IMITATORS THAT LOOK OLDER

<https://felispatronus.tumblr.com/post/664042705713856512/your-mileage-may-vary-on-this-depending-on-how>

TAGS; SYSTEM SPECIFIC, TRAUMA SPECIFIC, PARTS LANGUAGE

NOTES; Perpetrator here is used in reference to abusers, not the system role.

[6] BOUNDARY TESTING IN TODDLERS

<https://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/discipline/tips/setting-loving-limits/>

TAGS; GENERAL, CHILDCARE
NOTES;

[7] WHY KIDS TEST BOUNDARIES

<https://amotherfarfromhome.com/kids-really-push-envelope/>

TAGS; GENERAL, CHILDCARE
NOTES;

[8] KAZ ON WHY NOT TO LOCK UP HARM CAUSING MEMBERS

<https://persecutorlifeandsupport.tumblr.com/post/660813488980115456/when-we-say-dont-lock-up-your-persecutors-we-do>

TAGS; SYSTEM SPECIFIC
NOTES;

[9] SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH TRAUMATIZED CHARGES

<https://www.childtraumasherpa.com/2021/03/23/setting-boundaries-with-your-child-who-is-dealing-with-childhood-trauma/>

TAGS; TRAUMA SPECIFIC, CHILDCARE
NOTES; Seems to be directed towards those who have adopted a child with trauma.

[10] BOUNDARIES WITH TRAUMATIZED CHARGES

<http://www.nwtraumacounseling.org/family-resources/10-tips-for-disciplining-a-traumatized-child>

TAGS; TRAUMA SPECIFIC, CHILDCARE
NOTES;

[D2]

[19] LOW SELF ESTEEM

<https://positivepsychology.com/self-esteem-tools-activities/>

TAGS; GENERAL
NOTES;

[20] CBT WORKSHEETS

<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheets/cbt/none>

TAGS; GENERAL, WORKSHEET
NOTES;

[D3]

[21] TEAM BUILDING

<https://www.workamajig.com/blog/team-building-activities>

TAGS; GENERAL

NOTES;

[22] TEAM BUILDING 2

<https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/team-building-activities/>

TAGS; GENERAL

NOTES;

[E0]

[23] AFTERWORD DEFINITION

<https://www.diggypod.com/blog/afterword/>

TAGS; GENERAL

NOTES;